

Black Reconstruction

Yonkers, N. Y.
July 22, 1938

Mr. W. E. B. DuBois
Atlanta University
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear sir:

15-31-79

I do not often write to authors of books telling them what I think, but you are an exception, for your book on Black Reconstruction is an exception. I am a southern white man with ancestors who fought in the Civil War to keep your people in slavery; I grew up in the tradition of white superiority and southern justice; I attended college in the North without having my beliefs shaken. I had advantages, of course; my grandfather, although illiterate (legally so), believed that your people should have had their forty acres and a mule; my father fought with all his strength, and successfully, to prevent our county from separating Negro and white tax funds for school purposes; I got more out of college than the average student; I work in a factory and am a member of the Communist Party. Yet your book is a revelation, showing me for the first time what a powerful force your people have been, can be, and are for progress and Democracy. I am sorry that I did not come to it earlier. It is a sort of call to arms to blot out the wrong that my people have done to yours, and I take the call. I have no illusions about becoming a Thad Stevens, an Earl Browder, or a Jim Allen, but the little I can do is at the service of your people and mine, split into two artificial halves by their common enemy and oppressor.

I used to spend all my time trying to be a writer, but the strain of day after day in a steaming dyehouse, night after night pounding the streets to rouse union members, meetings and shop papers have rusted my typewriter and made my fingers lose their cunning and my brain its search for pithy phrase and well-turned sentence. Therefore I want to suggest to you the thing I want to do myself. Why don't you prepare a series of booklets and pamphlets to be sold for two, five, ten cents on Negro history, the truth about such things as Nat Turner's Rebellion, the

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glories of Haytian revolution, the story of reconstruction in simple, easily read language for our people? The Communist Party, The Workers' Library, International Publishers would help; Modern Age books would take a small volume with illustrations; James Ford and Tim Holmes would add their knowledge to yours. There is a need for such things, and not many workers, black and white, can or will go to the pains to read through volume after volume to get the truth. I have tried to do that, and I have found the glory of the Negro people shining through even the pages of Bowers and Fleming, but, as I have said, I am more fortunate than most workers. I know you are no Communist, you are not even a follower of Marxian analysis in your study of the second American revolution, but you must recognize our sincerity in working for all labor and in fighting for the obliteration of the color line between humans. and you must know that we have the ear of labor more than any other group within the country and must respect our propaganda distribution facilities. it is a bit presumptuous for me, a very lesser member of the Party, so freely to offer you its machinery, but I am hereby starting an awful yowl for it to do that very thing, and there is still enough of the rebel left in me to yell. your people want this knowledge; my people must have it, else we face the degradation of Hitler Germany. My part is a small one; you can do a big job. you write the pamphlets, or get them written, and I'll sell ten dollars of them here in Yonkers. Damn little for me to do, but I'll do more when I can.

Sincerely yours

George W. Cook
George W. Cook
179 Linden St.